

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 JERUSA 00656 062335Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----130163 062346Z /72

O 062301Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 441
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T JERUSALEM 656

EXDIS (HANDLE AS NODIS)

U.S. DEL NO. 67

FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, XF, US
SUBJ: SAUDI POSITION ON ATHERTON VISIT

1. FROM MY TALKS MONDAY IN CAIRO, AND INCREASINGLY FROM PRESS QUERIES, IT IS APPARENT THAT SUSPICIONS ARE GROWING THAT SAUDIS ARE DELIBERATELY SEEKING TO AVOID RECEIVING ME AT ANY SENIOR LEVEL. FOREIGN MINISTER KAMEL ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE FACT THAT I HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO PIN SAUDIS DOWN ON APPOINTMENTS FOR MY VISIT THERE. HE SPECULATED THAT THEIR ATTITUDE HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY SYRIAN DECISION THAT I SHOULD NOT VISIT DAMASCUS. SADAT REFLECTED THE SAME SUSPICION, ALTHOUGH MORE ELIPTICALLY. # DURING MY PRESS BACKGROUNDER IN CAIRO, I WAS ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY TRUTH TO THE REPORT THAT THE SYRIANS HAD SENT EMISSARIES TO BOTH JORDAN

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AND SAUDI ARABIA URGING THAT THEY NOT RECEIVE ME.

2. I HAVE RESPONDED IN ALL CASES BY SAYING THAT SAUDIS HAVE SAID I WOULD BE WELCOME TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA BUT THAT FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD'S RETURN FROM EUROPE HAD BEEN DELAYED AND THAT HE WOULD THEREFORE NOT BE AVAILABLE TO SEE ME. I HAVE MADE THE POINT THAT MY

MAIN PURPOSE IN GOING WOULD BE TO SEE HIM, AND QUESTION
OF WHETHER I WOULD BE RECEIVED BY KING KHALID OR
CROWN PRINCE FAHD HAS NOT SO FAR COME UP. EGYPTIAN ALL
AGREED THAT THERE WAS NO POINT IN VISITING SAUDI ARABIA
UNLESS I COULD SEE PRINCE SAUD. I HAVE TOLD THEM
PRIVATELY THAT I AM EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF MEETING
WITH HIM IN EUROPE ON MY WAY HOME.

3. IN BRIEF I HAVE TURNED ASIDE ANY SUGGESTION THAT SAUDIS
ARE SEEKING, WITHOUT SAYING SO, TO PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN
THEMSELVES AND OUR CURRENT ROLE IN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS,
SIMPLY SAYING THAT WE ARE STILL TRYING TO WORK OUT SCHEDULING
PROBLEMS WITH THE SAUDIS. THESE SUSPICIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY
PERSIST AND GROW, HOWEVER, AND I MUST ADMIT THAT I AM BEGINNING
TO SHARE THEM. I WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS DEPARTMENT,
AMBASSADOR WEST AND CHARGE WILEY MAY HAVE ON THIS CHARADE. THIS
ALL COULD BE SAUDI LACK OF COORDINATION, BUT FACT IS THAT
ON PREVIOUS TRIPS TO MIDDLE EAST ON BEHALF OF THE SECRETARY I
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO SEE SAUD AND USUALLY PRINCE
FAHD AND KING KHALID AS WELL.
NEWLIN

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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NNN

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